21st Century Messaging - The New Landscape of Candidate Communication

TALENT ACQUISITION

HCI White Paper

September 28, 2006

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Human Capital Institute

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HR Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Citigroup is a large organization with a multitude of different positions, creating a challenge for those responsible for recruiting new candidates. Citigroup's North American Operations and Technology (NA O&T) Staffing Group joined forces with First Advantage Corporation to create a new recruiting method that has the potential to blow away traditional print and online job listings. By taking advantage of a variety of new technologies and instituting consistent communication with prospects, Citigroup just might have broken the boundaries for recruiting practices and created a new set of standards.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Citigroup is diverse in its offerings, providing credit cards, banking, and loan services for individuals and businesses alike. A breakdown of the organization is explained in the chart below:

Heidi Anderson is Vice President of North American O&T Staffing at Citigroup. Her role is managing the non-exempt staffing strategy, which Anderson explains as determining "how to get a quarter million people a year to reconsider their employment situation and consider customer contact and other non-exempt roles within Citigroup Operations and Technology." Anderson is fully aware what a difficult task this can be.

Anderson took ownership of this role and created a surge of interest, identifying15,000 new potential job candidates in one month alone. She had help. Anderson and her group enlisted Vangie Sison with First Advantage Corporation (formerly TruStar Solutions) and her group. It took a lot of brainstorming, innovation, and courage, but after a long year, Citigroup is succeeding with a brand-new recruiting approach. Sison hopes that "you can apply [what we learned] in your own initiatives within your company."

Anderson admits that her expertise is not in Internet advertising, but as long as she knows someone who has that knowledge, it's O.K.. Sison was that someone for Anderson. "What struck me was the incredible Internet intelligence that First Advantage brought to the table." Citigroup felt it was extremely important that they "had experts at the table who could advise [them]." Anderson commended the expertise of First Advantage Corporation. "There is an element of trust, but

Figure 1

NA O&T Total Headcount	~50M
Businesses	4
Discrete business functions	80
Different positions	~1.6M
Locations *(excluding work-from-home)*	100
Candidates per annum	330M
External Hires per year approx.	16M

	Business
Operations	Citi Cards
	Retail Distribution NA
	Consumer Lending
	Commercial Business Group
Technology	NA Information Technology (NAIT)

then we obviously hold those partners accountable for the results, and they absolutely delivered for us."

Anderson explained the steps that Citigroup and First Advantage took to reach success, describing what they improved upon and which actions brought results.

CITIGROUP PHASE 1: WHERE THEY'VE BEEN

Prior to 2003, Citigroup advertised for jobs using mainly traditional methods. Since this tended to be costly, they sought out "a more prudent investment" of their resource dollars. They needed a method that would drive the flow of candidates, which was a requirement for the growing organization.

Citigroup initially posted jobs on America's Job Bank, particularly with TruStar (which is now First Advantage), because they offered an automated posting system. They also posted on HotJobs, Monster, and other job sites. While this step did generate some interest, they wanted more. The group wanted to reach more than the active job-seeking crowd, but also passive candidates.

Around this same time, Citigroup introduced a new global applicant tracking system (ATS). While similar systems are sometimes considered recruiting tools, very often they do not function in this manner. The benefits of the system were its ability to handle the volume of applicants as well as the multiple-language feature. All agreed that it was an excellent portal for applicants to research job options and apply for positions. However, the system appeared to be turning away potential candidates before Citigroup had the opportunity to make a connection. Anderson admits that, "all in all, it really takes a time investment for a job seeker to use our web site." This is a time commitment that an active job seeker might be willing to make. However, the number of hits that did not convert into candidates suggests that passive job seekers are not willing to invest that time.

The next step was to design a solution that would "build an electronic relationship to court those [passive] individuals into becoming more active job seekers." Citigroup turned to First Advantage Corporation for advice. Sison and her group studied the passive candidate or and put themselves in his or her mindset. Do I have the time to go through an application process? Do I even have an updated resume? They came to the realization that while the passive job seeker expressed an interest in a Citigroup career, as evidenced by the traffic to the site, he or she typically did not have the time or resources to go through the process. Sison felt that it was imperative to "find a solution in order to care for the non-job-seekers who we are courting and that do want to work with Citigroup."

CITIGROUP PHASE 2: TARGET CANDIDATE ONLINE BEHAVIOR

The target candidate was for the "customer contact" or "customer service" population within Citi Cards. This meant Generation Y, or 18- to 28-year-olds. Since a strategy was already in place for attracting active job-seekers, the group needed to focus on making contact with members of the target group that were not actively seeking employment. The first step in this process was to determine how Generation Y spends its online time. The graph below outlines these findings.

Figure 2

Where the non-active prospects are on the web

citi

What are they doing online?	Generation Y (18-28)	How do we reach them?
Almost every online college student (94%) has the ability to access the Internet from home		
Send and Receive Email	88%	Direct email marketing campaigns eNewsletter sponsorships and ad placements
Instant Message	75%	Ad placements on Instant Message or chat applications
Download Music	45%	Ad placements on media players and download jump pages
Get News	72%	Ad placements on portals targeted to selected profiles
Read Blogs	41%	Ad placements on Social Networking sites
Online Games	54%	Ad placements on gaming sites
Job Hunting	62%	Ad placements on career section of industry sites

Almost every college student who has the ability to access the Internet at school can access it at home. Sison found that the group was doing typical activities such as emailing, instant messaging, chatting, downloading music, games, and other applications; getting news, reading blogs, and even job hunting.

The next step of the process was to determine how to reach those who were not active job-seekers. Sison explains that the Internet offers various outlets for advertising that go beyond the traditional listing on a job site. These options included:

- Direct email marketing campaigns
- Sponsorships of newsletters
- Ad placements within the content of a newsletter article
- Ad placements on media players
- Ads while they are waiting for a down load to complete

Sison also wanted to take advantage of the popularity of social networking sites. "How can we leverage MySpace?" she asked.

The group realized that they needed to engage passive job seekers that held an interest in communicating with Citigroup. They wanted to know how to get these prospects from various places on the Internet to the career section of Citigroup web site. Anderson recalls, "That's where we really turned to external vendors for some advice."

CITIGROUP PHASE 3: WHERE WE WENT

First Advantage Corporation designed an Employment/Customer Prospect Database, which tracked potential candidates rather than applicants. Instead of requiring a time-commitment and detailed information, they only gathered basic contact information, such as their name, email address, type of work they are interested in, and where in the United States they'd like to work. The form looked similar to the following image:

Figure 3

The form was embedded in a point-and-roll banner that dropped down when the mouse rolled over the banner. The user had the option of staying on the current site or going to a landing page. The first landing page that was designed described Citi: its jobs, the company culture, and the benefits of working for them. It was all about Citigroup, and nothing about the prospect.

Sison placed the banners on "no-brainer" sites such as Google Search, Yahoo! Search, AOL Search, and MSN Search; sites that generate large amounts of traffic. Search engines enabled the group to choose keywords that were pertinent to their ad. They opted for keywords that involved holiday jobs, part-time positions, and jobs for students, all of which were relevant for the fourth quarter campaign. "Whether the demographic is young or old, it seems these days that our Internet activity starts out with a box, and that's the search box. So we wanted to make sure that Google Search, Yahoo! Search, AOL Search, and MSN Search were also included in the media campaign," Sison explained.

"At the end of the day, we were very conscious about what this was costing per hire, but we were most interested in the database that it was building," Sison remarked. In determining the cost per potential candidate, search engine pay-per-click advertising produced the lowest cost per return for Citigroup.

They posted ads on MySpace and other sites commonly trafficked by the target group. Additionally they went to local media, such as TV and radio sites and stations. They also aimed for the ethnic communities, targeting sites where Asian Americans, Hispanics, and African Americans "hang out"

online. We included "those sites that we knew were the talk of the town… especially if the URL rolls off their tongue and is something that they use all day long…. We definitely included very important diversity web sites and ethnic communities."

These brief contacts proved to be an amazing success for Citigroup, particularly since the campaign began in the fourth quarter, which is typically not a good recruiting season. The group discovered that since people were active online - holiday shopping, perhaps - it truly was the perfect time to unroll this new approach. The active Internet helped fill the database with 15,000 registrants in December alone.

The group was able to determine the effectiveness of each campaign in real-time through the use of the database. "The most important thing about this campaign is we can deploy campaigns all day long, but we will never know what the return of the campaign is if we were not tracking it in real-time. That is the beauty of interactive advertising." They monitored the number of impressions, the number of clicks, and the number of prospects. Through this rigorous monitoring, they were able to determine that some of the ads were slow in the number of clicks. After careful review of the ad, shown below, they determined that while it was a great branding effort, it was not producing results.

The content of the ad, again, was all about Citigroup. The group realized that they needed to shift the message to capture the attention of the audience. They changed the image to one that the target prospect could relate to, and instead of talking about how great Citi is, the headline was changed to be straightforward. Citi Cards is hiring in your city today! This new ad copy was not from Citigroup's perspective, but rather how this information affected the reader or prospect.

The group decided that instead of requiring a cumbersome application process, they would collect simple profile information. Then they went to work using the information that they had gathered. They made it Citigroup's responsibility to keep the prospect informed. The time commitment was now Citigroup's, and the potential candidate need only to read his email to stay informed. The ball was in his court, and he could choose to move forward with the application process when he was ready or able.

Figure 4

Both Anderson and Sison acknowledge that the email campaigns got a slow start. Only 6.5% of the emails for this campaign went out during the highest return in the database, and they yielded only 11% of the hires. However, the group became aggressive with the emails once the ad campaign was complete in January. A whop-

ping 93.5% of the messages went out after the campaign was over and this second push yielded 89% of the hires. The correlation between communication and results is evident.

The emails went out monthly and targeted individuals geographically and by job interest. They included information for local job fairs, for pre-employment assessments, special invitations and other pertinent information. It took a few contacts for prospects to convert to candidates, which was expected. However, results took less time than the group initially anticipated. Even those individuals who do not convert today or next month may do so in a year. Many of the database population are working somewhere else, but interested. This strategy keeps Citigroup ahead of other recruiters, as the prospect is already in contact with Citi's Staffing Group.

The most surprising element of this campaign was the exponential, viral marketing effect, which produced dramatic results. Citigroup's Internet sourcing increased 5% or approximately 16,500 people, and hiring on the customer contact side doubled in the second quarter, based on their Internet source code. There is an exponential effect that continues long after the campaign ended and is difficult to track.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CITIGROUP: MESSAGING VENUES

While Citigroup still maintains an active advertising role in traditional media, such as print, radio, and television, they are trying to attract the emerging workforce. Since this new generation behaves differently, they require the use of new technologies to capture their attention. The technologies listed below are utilized by Generation Y and other tech-savvy individuals in the current workforce.

- Mobile Marketing: Text messaging. Citigroup tends to be conservative in this area and chooses mainly opt-in ads
- Pod casting and Podvertising: When a person downloads a show to their iPod, you can buy 10 second or 30 second commercials that run prior to the show
- Product placement
- Content Sponsorship of RSS Feeds: Advertising that runs before the news reels or news feeds
- Radio-activated electronic billboard: This technology, which currently exists, monitors tracking devices in electronic equipment, such as GPS. The billboard can then respond with personal messages directed at the individual
- Rich media triggered by search behavior

Technology began with the cinema screen, then the TV, and then the computer. The latest technological screen, which Sison refers to as the "fourth screen," is the mobile device. What was once used solely for placing and receiving calls has evolved into a device that can take pictures, check email, play music, and access the Internet.

Sison tries to maintain the mindset of the target audience and reach them on their level with the technology that they use. She explains this process as "following technology and the development of how the Internet plays a part in our lives and how that relates to identifying our clients… and then utilizing those technologies."

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CITIGROUP: MESSAGING CONTENT

Figure 5

The image above shows a banner that Citigroup used early on in the campaign. While the banner brought good results, the group wanted to better integrate themselves with reaching passive job seekers in their own world. The screenshot on the right shows an ad on an IM toolbar that is on the screen during an Instant Message chat. The group is trying to reach prospects where they are, using technology with which they are familiar.

They have also changed the landing page, making it a "destination page." While the site still contains calls to action and direct links to Citi's employment information, it now also offers different elements that will draw people even if they aren't job hunting. The main difference between the old site (on the left) and the new one (on the right) is that the old site talked about Citi and the new one offers prospects an insight on what the information means to them. It is a MySpace style that utilizes activities in which the 18 to 28 age group is already engaging.

Bill McCraib, Senior Director at HCI Communities, applauds Citibank's efforts, stating that this new approach represents a total shift in how recruiters are reaching candidates. When recruitment advertising initially moved online, it didn't involve any fundamental changes. "It is so interesting to see recruiters think like other advertisers." When they make this step, it is possible to capture a group of prospects that didn't even know they were job hunting.

CONCLUSION

"The key is to be nimble… and to go where you think the candidates will be with the message that is most relevant to them." LeRoy Robins, the Executive VP of First Advantage Hiring Solutions, realizes that Anderson and Sison learned a lot during this process. The ability to attract non-job-

seekers is not a new concept. "People in HR have been talking about employment branding… and companies are now doing that." Robins realizes that moving in a new direction takes courage, but he knows that Citigroup has made the right choice. "This is about building relationships with people that you want to come work with your company…. This is a process."

Based on the Human Capital Institute webcast *21st Century Messaging - The New Landscape of Candidate Communication*, September 28, 2006.

PRESENTERS

Heidi Anderson
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Heidi Anderson, Vice President/Senior Manager is lead for Non Exempt Strategy Planning for Citigroup North America Consumer Group Operations and Technology Staffing. Following college at the University of MN, she began her Staffing Career in 1991, spending 6 years with a Midwestern Employment Agency. She continued on in Financial Services Staffing Leadership positions with GMAC-RFC/TriAdvantage and Chevy Chase Bank, joining Citigroup in 2003. Heidi resides in Sioux Falls, SD with her husband Dan and daughter Madelyn.

Vangie Sison
Media Director
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Vangie Sison is the Media Director for TruStar Solutions, a global market leader in developing non-biased, customized Internet recruiting solutions. Vangie creates and implements Interactive recruitment advertising strategies for organizations aiming to heighten their employer brand awareness and target potential candidates by leveraging the Internet's powerful ability to reach their target and communicate their career opportunities. Vangie's experience in media and advertising comes from eighteen years in radio advertising and five years in Interactive advertising.

MODERATOR

Bill Craib
Vice President, Communities
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Prior to joining the Human Capital Institute, Bill was the Founding Director of AIRS Human Capital Solutions, and served as Director of Training and Curriculum Development from 1997 to 2003. An early Internet adopter and advocate of its far-reaching potential, Bill developed his practical experience by establishing an Internet-centric executive search practice focused on telecommunications. This endeavor helped lay the groundwork for the significant contributions he has made to the core curriculum of AIRS. Bill earned a BS Degree from the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and spent 10 years as a journalist working for several media organizations, including ESPN and the Rocky Mountain News, before entering the recruiting industry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This White Paper is made possible by Towers Perrin, sponsors of HCI's Effective Hiring Track.

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The Human Capital Institute is a catalyst for innovative new thinking in talent acquisition, development and deployment. Through research and collaboration, our programs collect original, creative ideas from a field of top executives and the brightest thought leaders in strategic HR and talent management. Those ideas are then transformed into measurable, real-world strategies that help our members attract and retain the best talent, build a diverse, inclusive workplace, and leverage individual and team performance throughout the enterprise.

The Human Capital Institute gratefully acknowledges the financial and volunteer contributions of our Underwriters. They include:

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- AUTHORIA
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